

THE TRANSFER OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES  
IN THE *ṚKSAMHITĀ*

In this paper\* I should like to report upon some lines of analysis of Ṛgvedic texts, which I followed in my book *The Ṛgvedic Hymns*, published by «Globus» in Zagreb in 1987 in Croatian.

In the part concerning the mythic concepts and their expression in the *Ṛksamhitā* it was necessary to discuss the traditional view of kathenotheism or henotheism in the *Vedas*. It was without doubt one of the great merits of Max Müller to stress the differences in the religious outlook presented in the Ṛgvedic hymns and the common notions of polytheism and monotheism, instead of labelling the Indian phenomena with one of the well known terms. However, since his time an immense amount of research work has been done, and the features of the Ṛgvedic mythic outlook may — upon closer observation — need some modification today. To illustrate this, a few examples may be adduced.

Neither the characters nor the relative importance of different divinities are clearly distinguished in the *Ṛksamhitā*. Even names and epithets may be substituted for each other. Therefore, although the names are still the easiest criterion for the identification of a deity characterized by a number of epithets and features, sometimes, however, several «names» may refer to basically the same «divine character» (e.g. Savitar, Tvaṣṭar, Viśvarūpa), or the same «name» does not determine precisely which «form of the

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deity» is meant (e.g. Agni: terrestrial or celestial?), or we are put in the position of having first to identify by name the deity meant by epithets and features mentioned in the text. As some features may fit several divinities equally, we must search for such sets of features as can definitely point to one particular deity, or as a last resort conclude that several divinities are or may be alluded to.

It is the features expressing or revealing the essence of a divinity or a group of divinities that I shall call divine attributes. A feature may have different linguistic expression, it may be conveyed by a simple epithet or explained by any more complex linguistic unit: a group of words, a clause, even a short «discourse» usually appearing in the metrical form of the hymns as a stanza or a regular part of one. To recognize an attribute, we must follow semantic and even logical criteria, but this does not mean that the formal aspect of expressions can be neglected, because the recurrence of whole expressions or repetitions of some words or morphemes in them, in some cases even the phonetic allusiveness or «anagrammatism»<sup>1</sup>, are the only positive proof, relatively free from our interpretation, that we are concerned with the same attribute.

## II

Now, his «all embracing nature» may be one of the attributes which clearly show the pre-eminence of a deity. It may be applied to different divinities, but that does not necessarily prove that they are of the same nature, but rather that they are of equal rank, and so substantiates the henotheistic conception of the Vedic pantheon:

RV VII 101, 4<sup>ab</sup> - Parjanya:

<i>yásmīn víśvāni bhúvanāni</i>	in whom all words/creatures have
<i>tasthús</i>	stood/have rested,
<i>tisró dyāvas tredhā sasrúr āpah/</i>	three heavens, triply flowed the
	waters...

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1. It would be better to call it something like «cryptophonism» in the oral tradition.

RV I 35, 5<sup>cd</sup>-6<sup>ab</sup> - Savitar:

śáśvad víśaḥ savitúr daívyasyo-  
pásthe víśvā bhúvanāni tasthuḥ//

tisró dyāvaḥ savitúr dvā  
upásthān  
ékā Yamasya bhúvane virāṣāt /

For ever the settlers and all  
words/creatures have stood/  
have rested  
in the lap of divine Savitar,  
Three heavens: two are laps of Sa-  
vitar,  
one overcomes men in the world  
of Yama.

## RV VII 87, 5 - Varuṇa:

tisró dyāvo níhitā antár asmin  
tisró bhūmīr úparāḥ śáḍvidhā-  
nāḥ /

Three heavens are set down insi-  
de him,  
three earths are below, all toge-  
ther  
divided into six (layers).

Next comes a similar statement in negative formulation:

## RV VIII 6, 15 - Indra:

ná dyāva índram ójasā  
nāntárikṣāṇi vajrínam/  
ná vīvyacanta bhūmayah//

Neither the heavens by their  
greatness/  
nor the intermediate spaces,  
power, nor earths encompassed  
Indra, the wielder of the mace/  
thunderbolt.

These statements about Parjanya, Savitar, Varuṇa and Indra  
are not expressed in identical wording, but there are obvious a/  
formulaic correspondences between the first three:

1. yásmín víśvāni } bhúvanāni tasthuḥ,  
upásthe víśvā }
2. tisró dyāvas { tredhā sasarúr āpaḥ  
savitúr dvā upásthā  
níhitā antár asmin,

b/ verbal correspondences with the fourth: dyāvas, bhūmīs/

*bhūmayas*, and c/ terminologically possible equivalences: *āpaḥ - antāriksāni*.

Logically, the four statements seem to exclude one another if the divinities characterized by them are to be strictly distinguished entities. 1) The statements may be considered hyperbolic and adulatory, in which case they corroborate the henotheistic interpretation of the hymns, and thus need not satisfy any logical requirements. 2) Or we may postulate a so called prelogical stage of thought in order to be relieved of the need to interpret the mythical system in the hymns, and confine ourselves to explaining the mechanical skill of the poets in combining elements from the traditional stock of formulae into possible metrical patterns. 3) Or the divinities may not be strictly distinguished as individuals, but may be supposed to share even essential features, realms or functions. 4) Or the four statements may not belong to the same mythic outlook, and we must search for the appropriate context of each one in the *saṃhitā* to help us distinguish different mythical sub-systems and possibly their mutual conceptual, temporal or spatial relations.

Leaving aside the hypothesis of henotheism, for it is a possible functional explanation of systematic inconsistencies in the poetic statements in hymns, resulting from the relationship between a god and a poet-priest in the ritual, we might turn to the other three approaches to see if any of them provides us with a fuller explanation of the textual data in the Ṛgvedic corpus.

### III

It is always possible that on occasion a formula has been applied mechanically, but to claim this to be a general rule implies an eloquence that is indifferent to the meaning or to the truth of poetical assertions about the gods and therefore — even if striving to produce an aesthetic impression in the audience — also indifferent to the gods themselves as if they were figures of fiction. This however, contradicts both the ritual function and the explicit poetical principles in the hymns, and overlooks the highly coherent semantic and semiotic structure of our texts. Jan Gonda, summarizing his book *Epithets in the Ṛgveda*, rightly affirms: «The occur-

rence of the R̥gvedic epithets is, generally speaking, motivated or explicable in so many cases, these words are so often and so evidently functional, that any contention that they are inserted, first and foremost, for the sake of versification, or serve mainly as verse-filling formulas, is a priori highly improbable»<sup>2</sup>. If it is valid for the most elementary and stereotyped sort of attributes, the epithets, it can only be the more valid for more complex forms of attributes. If traditional formulae were at the poet's disposal, to be used as appropriate, these did not represent verse-filling expressions devoid of meaning, but the traditional crystallization of aesthetically successful and metrically fitting formulations of poetical and visionary insights into the hidden truth and the nature of the gods. Their application was a matter of poetic technique, but no mere mechanical skill could ever achieve it.

The epithets taken alone mostly characterize each divinity or group of deities individually, and seldom give insight into essential features common to different divinities, or help us to distinguish possible mythical sub-systems in the *Rksamhitā*. On the contrary, being the most stereotyped and traditional form of attributes, often as cult titles, they bear witness to the cult functions that a god or a hero primarily had for the community<sup>3</sup>.

Thus Indra is depicted by means of epithets such as: *vr̥trahan* «the destroyer of resistance → the killer of Vr̥tra», *vajrin* «the holder of the vajra, probably: a mace → thunderbolt (in later contexts)», *śūra* and *vīra* «hero, warrior», *śakra* «mighty», *śatakratu* «possessor of a hundred-fold strenght (cf. κράτος, κρατύς) of hundred powers/devices etc.», *ugra* «potent, impetuous», *maghavan* «abounding in gifts, generous», *vājin* «triumphant, plunderer...», *vasupati* «lord of wealth or brilliance», *vasudā*, «giver of wealth...», *gotrabhid* «breaking into cow-sheds...», *govid* «finder of cows», *gojit* «winner of cows», *pūrbhid* and *puramdara* «the smasher of walls/fortresses/dams...», etc. His predilection for the soma drink is described by the epithets: *somapā* «the drinker of soma», *somavr̥ddha* «refreshed by/increased by soma, mature

2. *Op. cit.*, Mouton, The Hague 1959, p. 259.

3. Cf. LEWIS RICHARD FARNELL, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality*, Oxford 1921, reprint 1970, p. 146.

through soma», *adrivant* «holding the pressing stones for soma...», possibly also *suśipra* and *śiprin* «having good (mighty?) (bearded) lips/mouth (to gulp down soma?)». These and similar epithets do not perceptibly conflict with the characters of other deities, and describe Indra primarily as a *pravīra* «champion in battles», rather like Heracles Πρόμαχος in Thebes.

Agni «the Fire» is represented in his physical appearance by the epithets *dhūmaketu* «the smoke-bannered» or *vātajūta* «impelled by the wind»; the effort to kindle him evoked his attributes: *sūnuḥ sahasaḥ* «the son of strength» and *ūrjo napāt* «the descendant of vigour»; when just kindled, he is *śīśu* «a child», *yuvan* or *yaviṣṭha* «young or the youngest (possibly: brave, (most) courageous)». etc.; he is further *dīdivi* «brilliant», *citrabhānu* «of conspicuous shine/glow», etc.; he is *pracetas* «mindful, wise, forethinking (like προμηθής)», even *viśvavid* or *viśvavedas* «all-finding» or «all-knowing» and *jātavedas* «finding or knowing (everything) born/(all) creatures»; as protector he may be *svapati*, *gr̥hapati* or *viśpati* «the lord of his own, of the house/family or of the settlement/village/clan»; he is in ritual *rakṣohan* «the smasher of evil demons/ night-spirits» and *uṣarbudh* «the awakener of the dawn»; as the intermediary between the gods and mortals he is *dūta* «the messenger», *atithi* «the guest», *havyavah* or *havyavāhana* «the conveyer of libations/sacrifices» and his main function is to act for sacrificers as a divine poet, *kavi*, and priest; *hotar*, *potar*, *brahman* or *purohita*.

Soma «the Pressed Juice» is, as a plant, described as *apām garbha* «the embryo of waters», *vīrudhām pati* «lord of plants», *vanaspati* «lord of woods», *giriṣṭha* «the inhabitant of mountain» etc. He shares the epithet *hiranyaya* «golden» with several deities partaking of the solar nature, but *hari* «golden, reddish, brown, yellow, greenish» (appropriate to his different metamorphoses), is pre-eminently, although not exclusively, his (otherwise it describes the two horses of Indra, less frequently of Agni, Savitar, Sūrya, Aśvins, Soma or Vāyu). However the god shares so many attributes with Agni that their particular affinity may be recognized even on the level of their common epithets: Agni too is *apām napāt* «the descendant waters»; when pressed, Soma is born as the soma juice, then he too may be styled *śīśu* «child» or *yuvan* «young (possi-

bly: brave)»; he flows into three tubs, as Agni is put into three hearths, therefore each of them may be called *triṣadhaṣṭha* «having three abodes»; in Soma's epithet *rakṣohan* we can already find a probable borrowing from Agni, whose efficacy in fits even better, as in *vr̥trahan* a borrowing from Indra. Regarding the cosmogonic relationship of the male Agni to the female Āpas «Waters», we may, following Abel Bergaigne<sup>4</sup>, wonder if Soma (a fiery liquid, coincidentia oppositorum) is not a representative of Agni in the medium of the Waters. His primary role is the role of the victim at the sacrifice, of the libation *havis*, which — having passed through death and been born anew as a young child — attains immortality, becomes immortal and bestows immortality, *amṛta*.

In contradistinction to the warrior Indra, the priest Agni and the victim Soma, Mitra and Varuṇa are gods of moral and spiritual order. According to Antoine Meillet<sup>5</sup>, Heinrich Lüders<sup>6</sup> and, finally, Paul Thieme<sup>7</sup>, just as the name Mitra means «Contract», the name Varuṇa must be a personification of a similar abstract; contextual semantic analysis led Thieme to accept Meillet's derivation from the I.-E. root \**ver* «to speak» and to propose meaning «True Speech» (*Wahrheitswort*). This readily explains Varuṇa's connection with the *vr̥ta* «the vow» and this frequent/major epithet *dhṛtavrata* «of firm vows who holds the vows». As he is not simply «True Speech» among mortals, but also a god among the gods, he surveys people's words and behaviour, being *dūḍabha* «hard to deceive». He supervises the circulation of waters and measures the cosmic spaces, being «in possession of measuring skill», *māyin*. The most distinctive epithet of his companion Mitra, which apparently also characterizes Varuṇa and Aryaman, is *yātayajjana* «inciting people to take each his allotted place».

Varuṇa and Mitra share with Indra, Agni, Soma and a few other divinities (Yama, Aśvins, Aryaman → Ādityas) the title *rājan* «king», but while Indra is the leader in battle, Varuṇa, and espe-

4. *La religion védique d'après les hymnes du Rig-Veda*, Paris 1963, Première partie, chapitre IV, tome II, pp. 4-114.

5. *Le dieu indo-iranien Mitra*, JA sér. 10, tome 10, p. 143, especially 156ff.

6. *Varuṇa I*, Göttingen 1951, p. 28ff.

7. *Mitra and Aryaman*, New Haven 1957, p. 59ff.

cially Mitra, guard the fundamentals of peace. In principle, only «those unprotected by (or violators of) the «Contract», amitrās, may be attacked and killed in war.

Among the most eminent deities in the *Ṛksamhitā* Savitar and Parjanya also deserve mention.

Savitar's name means «the Inciter/Stimulator /Vivifier» or «the Procreator»<sup>8</sup>. He awakens all beings at dawn and sends all to sleep in the evening. His most characteristic epithets indicate his golden hue: *hiranyākṣa* «golden-eyed», *hiranyapāṇi* «with golden hands» or *hiranyajihva* «golden-tongued». He is twice (*RV* III 55, 19; X 10, 5) identified with Tvaṣṭar «the Carver» and Viśvarūpa «the Giver of hues/forms to all beings» (cf. *RV* X 110, 9), but sometimes is apparently distinguished from the Sun as such (*RV* I 35, 9; I, 123, 3).

Parjanya's name is traditionally explained as *garjanmegha* «the thundering cloud». A. Meillet<sup>9</sup> derived it from the I-E root \*per «to strike, beat...», connecting it with the names of the Slavic god Perun and the Lithuanian god Perkūnas, which must be derived from the extended forms of the root: \*per-g and \*per-k<sup>11</sup>. The most archaic contexts in which the name Parjanya is documented (v. *RV* V 83, 2-4) point to the meaning «Thunder, the stroke of thunder/lightning». It agrees perfectly with the appellative meaning of the names of the Slavic and Baltic god. Especially after the researches in the field of Slavic and Indo-European antiquities made by V.V. Ivanov and V.N. Toporov<sup>10</sup>, other etymological proposals appear unconvincing. The authors moreover connected the three not identical but equivalent divine names with the name of poor's mother Fjörgyn, with the name of the Hittite god Pirua or Perua and with the word for the mountain, *parvata*, on which, for example, Indra killed the dragon. Parjanya's most prominent characteristic is the shedding of rains — he is *vr̥ṣṭimant* «rainy», but he also kills or strikes the *rakṣasas* and evil-doers.

8. Presumably, his name is a case of the homonymy at times fostered by the kavis to imply the identity or «magical» connection between different meanings.

9. *Le vocabulaire slave et le vocabulaire indo-iranien*, *Revue des études slaves* VI (1926), p. 171.

10. *Issledovanija v oblasti slavjanskih drevnostej*, Moskva 1974, see index.



Both Parjanya (RV V 83, 5) and Savitar (RV II 38: 3, 7, 9) are supreme guardians of divine vows or laws, *vratāni*.

Nevertheless, both Savitar — in that part of his stimulating and procreating nature which reveals itself through Sūrya «the Sun» — and Parjanya «the Thunder (stroke)» are first of all present in the elementary powers of nature. They are not gods of an abstract moral order. Their nature is, however, much more specific than Agni's, who is the element fire, or Soma's, who is the fiery representative of liquids in general in the hymns and in the ritual. Therefore their attributes betray a higher degree of coherence than those of Agni and Soma, and are, on the other hand, less frequently condensed into epithets.

All seven deities enumerated along with a few others (Dyau/Div, Pūṣan, Aryaman → Ādityas, Rudra → Rudrasya *maryās*) are prominent enough to bear the title *asura* (Av. *ahura*) «lord, ruler». It may originally be derived from the I.-E. root H<sub>1</sub>ns/Hons «to beget, procreate, give birth...» (cf. Hittite root *haš*: *haššatar* «the clan, tribe...», *haššannaš-šaš* «a man of his clan, a relative...», *hašša-hanzašša* «grand-children and great-grand-children»)¹¹. This root has yielded derivatives meaning «the head of a clan, chief, lord, ruler» (cf. Hittite *haššu* «the king, ruler»); the Vedic *asura* and Avestan *ahura* belong to that group, along with Germanic \**ansuz*, runic *a(n)suR*, Gothic (Lat.) *ansēs* (pl.), Old Icelandic *áss*, Anglo-Saxon *ōs*, etc. «the god, As»¹². The title in Vedic marks the divinities concerned as possible candidates for sovereignty among the gods. Does it corroborate the henotheistic conception of the Ṛgvedic pantheon?

The illustration given of characteristic epithets of some of the most prominent divinities in the *Rksamhitā* have acquainted us, on

11. N. ETtinger, *Die militärischen Eide der Hettiter*, Studien zu den BKT 22, O. Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1976. H. GÜNTERT, *Der arische Weltkönig und Heiland*, Halle/S. 1923, p. 101ff., and R.N. DANDEKAR, *Der vedische Mensch*, Heidelberg 1938, p. 24ff., supposed the derivation from the root AN «to breathe», cf. Ved. *asu*, Av. *aṇhu* «breath».

12. E. POLOMÉ, *The Indo-European Component in the Germanic Religion*, in: *Myth and law among the Indo-Europeans*, ed. Jan Puhvel, Univ. of California Press, pp. 55-82. V. T. V. GAMKRELIDZE - V. V. IVANOV, *Indoevropskij jazyk i Indoevropejcy*, Tbilisi 1984, p. 750.

the contrary, with some sets of highly stereotyped and formulaic attributes and demonstrated that in principle they make a clear distinction between groups of deities or single deities, and fit their characters in a well motivated and coherent manner. On what level do the contaminations and inconsistencies arise?

#### IV

It is mostly in more developed statements that the descriptions of deities lose their distinctness. As a product of a more conscious poetic effort, such statements can hardly be explained away as the mechanical application of formulae. Let us have a look at a pair of obviously intentional cases of contamination of divine attributes:

##### Specimen 1:

*RV I 91, 3-5 - Soma:*

*rājno nú te váruṇasya vratāni  
br̥hād gabhīrām tāva soma  
dhāma/  
śúciṣ tvām asi priyó ná mitró  
daksāyṇo aryamévāsi soma//*

*yā te dhāmāni divi yā pr̥thi-  
vyām  
yā párvateṣu óśadhīsv apsú/  
tébhir no víśvaiḥ sumánā áhe-  
lan  
rájan soma práti havyā gr̥bhā-  
ya//*

##### Specimen 2:

*RV II 1, 4 - Agni:*

*tvám agne rájā varuṇo  
dhṛtāvratas  
tvám mitró bhavasi dasmā  
īdyah/  
tvám aryamā sátpatir yāsya  
sambhūjam  
tvám ámṣo vidáthe deva bhā-  
jayúḥ//*

##### Parallels:

*cf. RV VII 61, 3-4<sup>a</sup> - Mitrāvaru-  
ṇā:*

*próror mitrāvaruṇā pr̥thivyāḥ  
prá divā ṛṣvād br̥hatāḥ sudānū/  
spáso dadhāthe óśadhīsu vikṣv  
ṛdhag yató ánimisaṃ ráksamā-  
nā//  
śámśa mitrásya váruṇasya dhā-  
ma...*

cf. RV I 24, 11<sup>c</sup> - Varuṇa:  
*áheḷamāno varuṇeha bodhi*

cf. RV VII 86, 2<sup>c</sup> - Varuṇa:  
*kim me havyám áhrṇāno juṣeta*

cf. RV I 130, 1<sup>abc</sup> - Indra:  
*éndra yāhy úpa naḥ parāváto  
 nāyám áchā vidáthānīva sátpa-  
 tir  
 ástam rájeva sátpatīh/*

*tvám somāsi sátpatis  
 tvám rájotá vrtrahā/  
 tvám bhadro asi krátuh//*

RV I 91, 3-5 - Soma:

The vows of the king True  
 Speech are yours,  
 your deed/law/abode is high  
 and deep, o Soma,  
 you are pure/radiant like the  
 dear Contract,  
 you are to be charished (with  
 Skill?) like Hospitality, o Soma.

RV II 1, 4 - Agni:

You are, o Angi, the king True  
 Speech of firm vows,  
 you become the wonderful  
 Contract to be worshipped,  
 you are the good host Hospi-  
 tality that I would enjoy,  
 you are the Lot, the distributor  
 in the assembly, o god.

Parallels:

RV VII 61, 3-4<sup>a</sup> - Mitra and Va-  
 ruṇa:

Your deeds/laws/abodes that  
 are in heaven and on earth,  
 on mountains, in plants, in  
 waters,

with all of them, well-diposed,  
 without anger,  
 o king Soma, accept our liba-  
 tions/sacrifices.

From the broad Earth, o Con-  
 tract and True Speech,  
 from the lofty, high heaven, you  
 two possessing beneficent moi-  
 sture,  
 are keeping your eyes on/spies  
 in plants and villages;  
 they are following each its/his  
 way while you are watching un-  
 blinking.

I will praise the deed/law/  
 abode of Contract and True  
 Speech...

RV I 24, 11<sup>c</sup> - Varuṇa:

Be here, o True Speech, without anger...

RV VII 86, 2<sup>c</sup> - Varuṇa:

Which libation/sacrifice of mine would he enjoy without anger?

RV I 130, 1<sup>abc</sup> - Indra:

You are the good host/the lord of beings, o Soma,

Come here, Indra, to us from afar

you are king and the killer of Vṛtra/destroyer of resistance, you are the beneficent strength.

like this man, the good host/lord, to the counsels, like the king, the good host/lord, to his house.

In RV I 91, 4 we may note verbal correspondences with contexts like RV VII 61, 3-4<sup>a</sup>:

*dhāmāni, divi, pṛthivyām: pṛthivyāḥ, divāḥ, dhāma,*  
-like RV I 24, 11<sup>c</sup>:

*āheḷan: āheḷamānaḥ,*

an almost formulaic correspondence with RV VII 61, 3:

*ōṣadhīṣu (apsú): ōṣadhīṣu (vikṣú),*

a terminological equivalence to a context like RV VII 86, 2<sup>c</sup>:

*āheḷan (prāti) havyā (gṛbhāya): havyām āhrṇāno (juṣeta),*

a semantic correspondence with RV VII 61, 3:

*yā te dhāmāni... apsú: sudānū,*

an etymological correspondence:

*dhāmāni... ōṣadhīṣu: dadhāthe ōṣadhīṣu,*

and a well-balanced «anagrammatic» or cryptophonic complement to overt statements:

<i>vís(vaiḥ)su-</i>	: vikṣú
<i>apsú</i>	: (sudān)ū spá(śo)
<i>párvateṣu</i>	: <i>prá(di)vá (ṛṣvād bṛha)tá(h) su-</i>
	(correct: ra/va → ar/va!)

In the face of such poetic technique, what use can be made of the hypothesis of mechanical versification in oral poetry?

The whole complex of correspondences, equivalences and cryptophones, together with the instantaneously recognizable subject matter, connects the statements about Soma in *RV* I 91, 4 with the attributes of Varuṇa (and Mitra). That it is not a matter of accidental correspondences is proved by explicit statements in the preceding stanza, where Soma is compared to Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman (and Dakṣa). In the following stanza 5 Soma is identified with Indra, not only by means of cumulative allusive correspondences: satpati, rājan, kratu (cf. Indra's epithet śatakratu), but also by the specific epithet of Indra: vṛtrahan.

In the same way Agni is identified with the principal Ādityas in *RV* II 1, 4: Váruṇo dhṛtāvratas, Mitrá, Aryamán and Āmśo vidátthe bhājayús.

Obviously, in these examples Agni and Soma do not share common attributes with the Ādityas or Indra, but incorporate the attributes of the latter. In such cases poets transfer the attributes intentionally, in these cases explicitly, in order to express the (partial) identity of the deities concerned. Agni and Soma have, as already incidentally mentioned, exceptionally comprehensive characters. They are, on the one hand, all-pervading natural elements and can include all other divinities in themselves. On the other hand, the motive for transferring those attributes which fit precisely the particular characters only of other deities to Agni and Soma is to be found in their role in the ritual: it is only through them, as the divine priest and the divine victim, that human poets and priests can influence all other divinities.

This kind of transfer could be termed subordinative or syntagmatic transfer. It does not cancel either the existence or the specific functions of deities whose attributes are shifted to more comprehensive and many-sided divinities. It simply incorporates more specific functions into more general functions, and merges the essential features of the performers of the former functions in more many-sided characters of the performer of the latter, subordinating them all to a system of theology-cosmology and of ritual participation in the cosmos.

But there is still another kind of transfer of divine attributes.

A) Dyau/Div «the bright diurnal Heaven» is father of the devas «the celestials, gods». Therefore he is called Dyaúh pitá «the father Sky». Of all Ṛgvedic divine names his has the most ramified correspondences in different Indo-European branches, the more impressive because the whole formula is often documented, I.-E. \*Djēus pḥtēr: Av. only G. dyaoš, Greek Ζεὺς πατήρ, Latin Iūpiter, Diēspiter, Umbrian Iupater, Oscan Diúveí (D.), Illyrian Δει-πάτωρ, Hittite siu(n) «god». Deva also has many correspondences, I.-E. \*deiuos: Av. daēva «a false god», Lat. deus, Gaulish Dēvo- (in names), Old Irish dia, Old Germanic teiwa-, Old Icelandic tívar (pl. «gods»), Týr, Anglo-Saxon Tīg (G. Tīwes), Old High German Zīo, Old Prussian deiws, Lithuanian diēvas<sup>13</sup>.

In the *Ṛksamhitā* his name appears mostly in the genitive, about 50 times, as an attribute to *duhitar* «daughter» or to *sūnu*, *śiśu*, *napāt*, *putra* «son». In about three quarters of the occurrences it is Uṣas «Dawn» who is his daughter, in the rest the *Aśvins*, *Agni*, *Parjanya*, *Sūrya*, *Mitra-Varuṇa*, the *Ādityas*, the *Maruts* or the *Angirases* may be his sons<sup>14</sup>.

The stereotyped formula *Divó duhitā* in the hymns to Uṣas «Dawn» may, however, be replaced by the formula *Sūryasya duhitā* «the daughter of Sun» in the hymns to the *Aśvins*, sometimes to *Agni* or *Soma*, or elsewhere the Dawn under the name *Saraṇyū* may be introduced as the daughter of *Tvaṣtar*, or under the name *Sūryā* as the daughter of *Savitar*; i.e. Div's most frequent attribute, his being the father of the Dawn, may be shifted to those deities.

Since the daughter of *Savitar* has the proper name *Sūryā*, it is probable that *Sūrya* preceded *Savitar* as the father of the Dawn. This textual evidence is in accordance with the fact that the name *Savitar* seems to be an Indo-Aryan creation, while the name *Sūrya* has many Indo-European cognates which are sometimes also theonyms: Av. *Hvarə*, Greek Ἡέλιος, Ἡλιος..., Lat. *Sōl*, Cymric *haul*, Breton *heol*, Gothic *sauil*, Old Icelandic *sōl*, Lith. Lettish *saulē*,

13. V. J. POKORNY, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* I, Berlin-München 1959, pp. 184-185. M. MAYRHOFER, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, Bd. II, Heidelberg 1963, pp. 63-64, 70.

14. V. A. A. MACDONELL, *Vedic Mythology*, Grundriss III 1 A, Strassburg 1898, reprint: Delhi 1974, p. 21.

Old Slavic slъnyce<sup>15</sup>.

Nor should it be overlooked the Uṣas «Dawn» may boast of equal antiquity; cf. Greek Ἥως..., Lat. Aurōra..., Cymic Gwawr, Anglo-sawon Ēastre (the goddess of spring), Old High German Ōst(a)-ra, Lith. aušrà, Lettish āust, āustra, Old Slavic za ustra «ealry»; utro, jutro (?) «morning»; cf. from the same root vesna «spring», Old Indian vasanta, Greek ἔαρ, Lat. ver, Old Icelandicic vār, etc.<sup>16</sup>.

What is with Div and Sūrya a formulaic epithet of Uṣas (which may be logically reversed to become an attribute of Div or Sūrya), with Tvaṣṭar and Savitar becomes a more complex and less formalized attribute, wick is to be abstracted semantically and logically from the context of the myth. The former case may point to greater antiquity, the latter to a relatively more recent development.

Tvaṣṭar and Savitar are sometimes explicitly identified (RV III 55, 19; X 10, 5). Tvaṣṭar's name is, however, documented already for the Indo-Iranian period, cf. Av. pwōrōštar; it means «the Carver, Form-maker...», therefore there is ample motive for giving him the epithet *suṣāṇi* «of good/skilled hands» harmoninzing with his other epithets like *sukṛt* «well-doing», *svapas* «of good deeds/works», etc. The first epithet, when shared by Savitar, accords with Savitar's epithets like *sujihva* «of good/skilled/pleasent tongue», and more charasteristically *hiranyajihva*, *hiranyākṣa*, *hiranyapāṇi* «of golden tongue, eye, palm/hand», but it could have been borrowed from Tvaṣṭar. Another common epithet or name of both deities is *viśvarūpa* «the giver of forms/hues to all/everything» (cf. RV X 110, 9), which is an expression semantically equivalent to the name Tvaṣṭar, and therefore very probably shifted form him to Savitar. In a similar manner we might suppose that an apparently younger name of the supreme deity in the Brāhmaṇas, Prajāpati «the Lord of progeny», may be semantically equivalent to one component of Savitar's name: «the procreator», continuing the

15. J. POKORNY, *ibid.*, p. 881; M. MAYRHOFER, *ibid.*, III, pp. 496, 566-567.

16. J. POKORNY, *ibid.*, pp. 86-87. It is interesting to note that the meaning of corresponding words in different Indo-European languages vacillates between «dawn» and «spring», which corroborates the hypothesis that Uṣas, and her Indo-European prototype, was the dawn of the year or of the New Year.

series: (Dyauḥ) pitā → Savitar → Prajāpati; Savitar is styled in *RV* IV 53, 2: *divó dhartā bhūvanasya prajāpatiḥ* «the upholder of the sky/firmament (div) and lord of progeny/procreator of the world».

We may now try to represent the possible transfers of divine attributes in the *Ṛksamhitā*, which we have just been following, in a tentative diagram (1):

Indo-European etymological  
reconstruction:

Ṛgvedic contextual evidence:

Indo-European stage:

\*Djēus pḥtēr

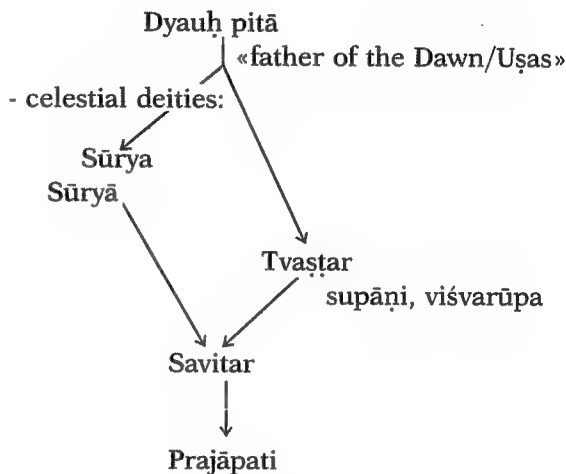
\*H(a)usos

\*S(a)uH(e)l-jo-

Indo-Iranian stage:

\*Tvarštar

Indo-Aryan stage:



In terms of method, two sets of arguments should be distinguished: a) the textual or contextual arguments (attributes like «father of the dawn»; denominations: *Sūryasya duhitā* → *Sūryā*; epithets: *supāṇi, viśvarūpa*), which reveal the degree of motivation or justification for an attribute (simple or more often complex) in its context (the most simple context would consist of the name and an attribute; a more involved one, a complex of attributes), and b) the etymological evidence, which shows the diffusion of Indo-European correspondences to Vedic names, epithets or other expressions, implying their antiquity in each particular case. In the most favourable case the two sets of arguments largely overlap and thus mutually corroborate their implications. Where the evi-



dence is scantier, the two types of argument must at least be brought into accord with each other.

A remark must be made concerning the type of transfer of divine attributes sketched in the preceding diagram, where the results of the contextual analysis (a, on the right side) have been co-ordinated with the categories implied by the etymological evidence (b, on the left).

If Tvaṣṭar takes over a characteristic attribute of Div, i.e., supersedes him in a mythical role, Div does not appear anymore in that role in the same mythic context: he is ousted. It is hard, on the grounds of the textual evidence preserved, to evaluate whether Tvaṣṭar was a more comprehensive or many-sided deity than Div, Savitar than Tvaṣṭar, Prajāpati than Savitar; but the other deity, after some of his essential features have been shifted to the more recent mythic personality, in principle did not retain the same functions nor even appear any more in the new context. So this is not a case of subordinative or syntagmatic transfer. We might call it a substitutive or paradigmatic type of transfer of divine attributes.

The subordinative transfer produces a comprehensive synthesis of mythic and ritual functions of divinities. The substitutive transfer reforms the mythical and ritual system. The former many imply continuity in the cult, the latter seems to imply a break or a change in the cult.

B) The most prominent god in the *R̥ksaṃhitā* is Indra. His name and even his worship as a god is possibly documented for the Indo-Iranian period, as he is mentioned as a daēva in the *Vidēvdāt* (10, 9; 19, 43), along with Saurva and Nāṇhaiḍya (Śarva and Nāsatya), if «Indra» is not here an Indo-Aryan loan-word. It could agree very well with the connections between Indra and Tvaṣṭar in the *R̥ksaṃhitā*.

Benveniste and Renou were of the opinion that three themes concerning Indra in the *R̥ksaṃhitā* were to be distinguished: 1) a religious motif: the feats of a victorious god (*Vḍrḍṭrayna* - *Vṛtra*-han), 2) an epic motif: the fight between the hero (Indra) and the monster, and 3) a mythic motif: liberation of the waters; they believed that originally Indra was connected only with the second theme, and was considered simply as a hero (cf. epithets: *nārya*,

*mānuṣa, indriya*)<sup>17</sup>. The view that Indra was originally a hero was also supported by R.N. Dandekar<sup>18</sup>. P. Thieme rightly corrected Benveniste's and Renou's conception of the identification of Indra with the god *Vṛr̥d̥ṣayna*: Indra was never identified with Indo-Iranian \**Vṛtraghna* (Av. *Vṛr̥d̥ṣayna*), he merely incorporated the quality of (Indo-Iranian) \**Vṛtraghana* (n.) «victorious offensive» (B.-R.) and became *vṛtrahan* in the Vedas<sup>19</sup>. Contrary to certain Benveniste's and Renou's conclusions, however, but thanks to their penetrating and stimulating analyses, it seems that it would originally fit such a supposed hero better to destroy resistance in battles as \**vṛtraghan*, than to fight with a monster, which can be considered rather a mythic motif than a purely religious one, together with the liberation of the waters. The preceding cursory survey of Indra's epithets (v. part III) corroborates the impression of his original (Indo-Iranian?) heroic status, but his complex attributes in the *Ṛksamhitā* give a largely different picture of Indra.

Traditionally (and perhaps most commonly even today) he is considered as the atmospheric god (Nirukta 7, 5), the bestower of rains. This view demands the interpretation of his fight with the *vṛtra* as a simile (Yāska: *tatropmārthena yuddhavarṇa bhavanti, Nirukta* 2, 16), *Vṛtra* himself as a cloud, Indra's *vajra* (most probably «mace») as a thunderbolt, cows and rivers as rains etc. There are very few explicit statements in the *Ṛksamhitā* that corroborate that view, e.g.:

RV IV 26, 2 - Indra:

*ahām bhūmim adadām āryāyā-  
hām vṛṣṭīm dāśūṣe mārtyāya /  
ahām apō anayam vāvaśānā  
māma devāso ānu kētam āyan//*

I gave the land to the Aryan,  
I gave the rain to a mortal wor-  
shipper,  
I drove the bellowing waters,  
it was my will/sign that the  
gods were following.

17. ÉMILE BENVENISTE - LOUIS RENOU, *Vṛtra et Vṛtraghna*, Étude de mythologie indo-iranienne, Paris 1934, p. 182.

18. R.N. DANDEKAR: *Vṛtrahā Indra*, ABORI XXXI, pp. 1-35.

19. PAUL THIEME, *The Aryan Gods of the Mitanni Treaties*, Kleine Schriften, Wiesbaden 1971, p. 407ff.

However, the word *vr̥ṣṭi* «rain», for instance, (56 occurrences in the *samhitā*) appears only twice in the 250 hymns to Indra, but is attributes 13-18 times to Soma (120 hymns), 6-8 times to the Maruts (33 hymns), 6-7 times to Mitra and Varuṇa (25 hymns), 3 times even to Agni (200 hymns), once to Vāta (2 hymns) and 3-4 to Parjanya (3 hymns), who alone has the epithet *vr̥ṣṭimant*. This fact clearly illustrates how weak is Indra's specific connection with the rains. And, indeed, in the hymns to Indra himself we have a clear hint as to the origin of the attribution of rains to Indra:

RV VIII 6, 1 - Indra:

*mahāñ indro yá ójasā`  
parjányo vr̥ṣṭimāñ iva /  
stómair vaisāsya vāvr̥dhe //*

Mighty is Indra by his greatness  
like Parjanya who brings rains;  
he increased through Vatsa's praises.

Parjanya serves here as the best-known paradigm of a rain-shedder.

It does not solve at a stroke the problem of Indra's connection with the waters in general, *āpas*. This connection might be partly motivated even within his hypothesized original heroic character, if the Aryans in his nam had been conquering land and river courses<sup>20</sup>. It is, however, not the task of this paper to solve such problems in every detail, but to demonstrate the types and methods of transfer of attributes as traces of the genesis of the Vedic pantheon, which still need exhaustive study.

Indra's frequent association with Vāyu «the Wind» in the pair Indra-Vāyū is apparently another inheritance from Parjanya who was similarly associated with Vāta «the Wind» in the pair Vātā-Parjanya (RV VI 50, 12; X 65, 9). If Vāta's name is derived from the root VAT (and not from VĀ)<sup>21</sup>, it might be akin to Old Icelandic Óðinn, Anglo-Saxon Wōden, Old High German Wuotan. In that

20. Cf. DAMODAR DHARMANAND KOSAMBI, *Culture et civilisation de l'Inde ancienne* (French translation), Paris 1970, pp. 107-108.

21. F.R. SCHRÖDER, *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* (Heidelberg) N.F. 17, p. 7 ff.; Paul Thieme, *Asiatica*, *Festschrift Weller*, p. 656 ff.

case both members of the original pair may be Indo-European divinities, one well attested outside India in to close variants in the Baltic and Slavic tradition, the other in the Germanic heritage.

Between the periods of the two divine pairs just mentioned we have a different pair, Mitrā-Varuṇā, also praised for the distribution of waters in general and rain in particular. Varuṇa especially is connected with waters<sup>22</sup>. However, Paul Thieme, while contesting the often presumed identity of Varuṇa and Ahura Mazdā, called our attention to some passages in the hymns where there is mention simply of an unnamed Asura, to whom major features are attributed:

RV V 83, 6<sup>cd</sup>

*arvāñ atēna stanayitnūnehi  
apó nišīncānn ásurah pitā nah//*

Come hither with this thundering,  
shedding waters as our father  
Asura.

RV V 63, 3<sup>d</sup>

*dýāṃ varṣayatho ásurasya māy-  
āyā //*

you both are making the sky  
rain through the measuring  
skill of Asura.

ibid. 7<sup>bc</sup>

*vratā raksethe ásurasya māy-  
āyā/*

you both are guarding the vows  
through the measuring skill of  
Asura,

*ṛténa víśvam bhúvanam ví rāja-  
tah*

you are ruling over the whole  
world through the truth/  
righteousness.

The importance of these citations lies in the fact that, although the hymn RV V 63 is dedicated to Mitra and Varuṇa, it is not they who are styled asuras in the hymn and directly credited with the *māyā*, probably «measuring skill», but an Asura distinguished from them. On the Iranian side the parallels may be found in

22. HEINRICHY LÜDERS, *Varuṇa*, I: Varuna und die Wasser, Göttingen 1951.

calling *āpō* «the waters» *ahurānīš*, *ahurahyā/ahurahe* «women of Ahura» and «daughters of Ahura» (Yasna Haptaṇhāiti 38, 3; 68, 10), and in the mention of Mitra and an Ahura who are *ašavana* «truthful, righteous» (Nyayišn 2, 12). Such facts induced Thieme to presume that this Asura/Ahura might be the remaining trace of an Indo-Iranian \*Asura, out of whom might have developed both asura Varuṇa and Ahura Mazdā on the Iranian side<sup>23</sup>.

These very fruitful observations may bring us even further in two directions.

1) As the hymn RV V 83 is dedicated to Parjanya, if we do not prove that the stanzas 6-8 or 10, where his name does not occur are of a different mythic origin, the statement cited will normally be understood as referring to asura Parjanya. The hymn to Mitra-Varuṇā RV V 63 also mentions Parjanya twice as a divine person; it mentions also *div*, as many as nine times, but, as it seems, rather as an object or place of divine actions than as a divine person. We should, however, not lose sight of passages like RV X 67, 5<sup>cd</sup> - Bṛhaspati:

<i>Bṛhaspátir uṣásam sūryam gām arkām viveda stanāyan iva dyaúh</i>	Bṛhaspati found the Dawn and the Sun, the cow and the ray, thundering like the Sky.
---	--

Roots VID and JAN are often substituted for each other to express the idea that one god found or begot another<sup>24</sup>. Dyau/Div not only serves Bṛhaspati here as a paradigm of a thunderer, as Parjanya does Indra in RV VIII 6, 1<sup>b</sup>, but this may remind us also of the fact that originally it was he who begot Uṣas and Sūrya (v. above): up to this point all these attributes have been usurped by Bṛhaspati, but in this stanza we can still catch him in flagranti.

2) If Varuṇa and Mitra rule over the waters and guard the

23. PAUL THIEME, *The «Aryan» Gods of the Mitanni Treaties*, Kleine Schriften, p. 403.

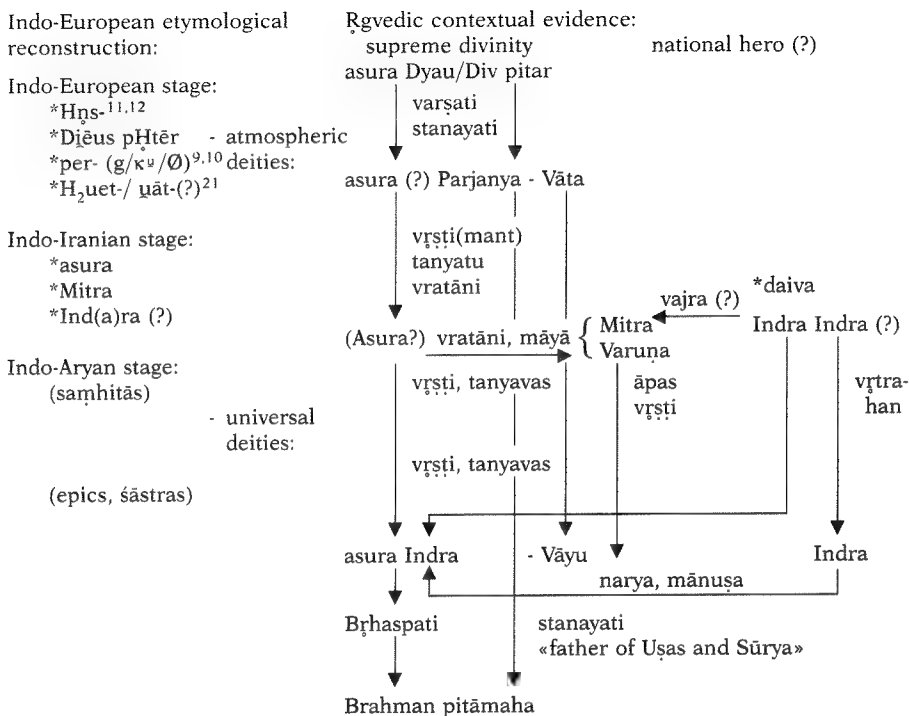
24. Cf. e.g. RV III 39, 5: *Indraḥ... Sūryam viveda* «Indra... has found Sūrya», and RV II 12, 7: *yaḥ Sūryam yá Uṣásam jajāna... sá... Indraḥ* «It is Indra... who has begotten Sūrya, Uṣas».

(divine) vows in *RV* V 63 merely thanks to the *māyā* of an ancient Asura, then Varuṇa need no longer be considered in certain respects as a real predecessor of Indra, but only as a mediator of certain features of that Asura. «Contract» and «True Speech» are gods of a different ontological order from asura Div, asura Parjanya (*RV* V 83, 6), asura Indra, etc.; the Ādityas in general represent moral abstractions or principles, as the abstract *amōša spōntas* in Iran (all gathered round (the non-abstract) Ahura Mazdā «the Wise Lord»), but none of whom is as old as Miθra who belongs to the more heterogeneous group of older divinities, the *yazatas*. In the passages cited we do not have merely a piece of evidence for the evolution of an Indo-Iranian \*Asura to asura Varuṇa on the one hand and to Ahura Mazdā on the other, we have a hint for the reconstruction of a greater mythic semiotic system with a still deeper historical dimensions. An Asura disposing of his «Contract» and «True Speech» was a Lord with whom it was possible to make a sacrificial Contract giving him the True Word, as purely between mortals in the 14th century B.C. the Mitanni king Kurtiṇṇa or Mattiṇṇa made a contract with the Hittite king Šuppiluliuma invoking those deities as witnesses. If the Indo-Aryans in the Mitanni kingdom<sup>25</sup> already had a conception of divine Contract and True Word/Speech, we may wonder whether they did not also make a contract with the divine Lord. Perhaps they served as a religious precedent in the Near and Middle East, if the usual commonplace holds true that, later, Hebrews were an exception among neighbouring peoples, because they made a covenant with God.

The lines of the paradigmatic transfers of attributes enumerated so far may be tentatively interpreted in the following diagram (2):

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25. P. THIEME, *ibid.*, argues that they were not Aryans in general, i.e. Indo-Iranians, but specifically Indo-Aryans because, for instance, they worshipped Varuṇa, who is not documented for the Indo-Iranian period.



In the Mitanni treaty the place of Asura (Div, Parjanya) was already held by Indra.

The textual evidence in the *Ṛksamhitā* points to the transfer of divine attributes from older to younger divine characters who replace the former and change the cult, but also partly preserve the mythic structure precisely by attracting those attributes which represented the vital functions of older divinities. The traces of these transfers seem to betray a powerful historical memory of previous stages of myth and ritual, and may be of immense help in reconstructing that history.

C) If Indra was originally a hero, his attraction of attributes from atmospheric gods made him pre-eminently the thundergod by giving a new context to his older attributes and reinterpreting them *upamārthena* «in the sense of similes».

He attracted, on the other hand, attributes from the celestial deities too.

The celestial deity who, besides Div, received the title asura is

Savitar (e.g. RV IV 53, 1). Therefore he may also be associated with the assistants of an asura: his «Contract» and «True Word/Speech»:

RV III 38, 5

*āsūta pūrvo vṛṣbhó jyāyān  
imā asya śurūdhaḥ santi  
pūrvīḥ/  
divo napātā vidáthasya dhībhiḥ  
kṣatrām rājānā pradīvo dadhā-  
the //*

RV III 38, 5

The elder bull first started inci-  
ting/procreating,  
he has many such cattle-  
increasing (? means).

O sons of Sky, by means of your  
insights in the assembly  
since long ago, o kings, you  
both establish the dominion/  
rule.

Parallel:

e.g. RV V 62, 6 - Mitrāvaruṇā:  
*ākraivihastā sukṛte paraspā  
yām trāsāthe varuṇēlāsu antāḥ/  
rājānā kṣatrām āhrṇīyamānā  
sahásrasthūṇam bibhr̥thaḥ sahā  
dvaú //*

RV V 62, 6

With hands unstained by blood...  
you both protect the benefactor  
from afar  
whom, Varuṇas, you both shel-  
ter in the midst of refresh-  
ments.

Toghether, o kings, without  
anger,  
you both hear the dominion/  
rule relying on a thousand pil-  
lars.

This is a case where we must identify the divinities thought of in RV III 38, 5 by recognizing their attributes. «Asūta», «incited/procreated or started inciting/procreating», is an etymological figure implying that the elder bull should be understood as Savitar. Not until three stanzas later is his name finally mentioned (st. 8). «Kṣatrām rājānā... dadhāthe», «o kings, ...you both establish the dominion/rule», is the signal, as is proved by the parallel RV V 62, 6, that the other two companions are to be recognized as Mitra and Varuṇa. By the attribute *divo napātā* «two sons of Sky» they are probably compared to the Ásvins.

The famous hymn to Indra RV II 12 depicts an unusual number of sides to his character. Of its 15 stanzas, however, stanzas 4-7<sup>b</sup>



and 8-11<sup>b</sup> are concerned with his warrior character. For the rest we should search for their origin in myth. For st. 13 we may find a parallel in the context of Parjanya's attributes:

RV II 12, 13<sup>abc</sup> - Indra:

*dyāvā cid asmai pr̥thivī namete*  
*śúṣmāc cid asya párvatā bha-*  
*yante/*  
*yaḥ somapá nicitó vájrabāhur...*

RV V 83, 5<sup>a</sup> - Parjanya:

*yásya vraté pr̥thivī nánnamiti...*

RV II 12, 13<sup>abc</sup>

Heaven and Earth bow/  
 tremble/submit to him,

the mountains are afraid of his  
 roar/breath,  
 he who is a notorius drinker of  
 soma with the mace as/in his  
 arm...

RV V 83, 5<sup>a</sup>

At (the time of) whose vow the  
 Earth keeps bowing/trembling/  
 submitting to him...

This parallel is not accidental. In their remarkable work on Slavic antiquities, V.V. Ivanov and V.N. Toporov have shown that «parvata» may be etymologically akin to «parjanya», if derived from \*perunt-, and that it is the name of the mountain (in the reconstructed Indo-European sacral text) on which the thunder-god kills the dragon \*ng<sup>whi</sup> (→ Skr. ahi, Slavic ožb...) <sup>26</sup>. Thus, the whole myth about killing the ahi, which was identified with Vṛtra in the *Ṛksaṃhitā*, proved to belong originally to the sphere of Parjanya/Perun-/Perkúnas. It was only at the Indo-Aryan stage attracted into the sphere of Vṛtrahan.

26. *Op. cit.*, p. 101. It implies, contrary to Benveniste and Renou, that 1) the liberation of the waters and the fight with a dragon were originally connected in the context of the myth of Parjanya/Perun-/Perkúnas, just as was supposed that 2) the epithet *vṛtrahan* should be connected with Indra's presumed heroic character on the other hand.

In the passage cited we have, moreover a cryptophone:

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} pṛ(thiví) \\ pâr(vatâs) \end{array} \right\} \rightarrow \begin{array}{l} \text{the following b(ar) should be corrected} \\ \text{to p(ar)!} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{c} yâh... n(icitó v)âjrab(âhus) \\ \xleftarrow{3} \quad \xleftarrow{2} \quad \xleftarrow{1} \end{array}$$

On the other hand, stanza 2, which depicts Indra in the most elevated terms as a demiurge has a close parallel in the context of Savitar's attributes:

RV II 12, 2 - Indra:

*yâḥ pṛthivīm vyáthamānām*  
*âdṛñhad*  
*yâḥ pârvatân prâhupitân áram-*  
*ñât/*  
*yó antárikṣam vimamé várīyo*  
  
*yó dyām ástabhnât sá janāsa*  
*índrah//*

He who fixed the trembling earth,  
 who calmed the enraged mountains,  
 who measured out the intermediate space/atmosphere wider,  
 who propped up the heaven, he,  
 o peoples, is Indra.

Parallel:

RV X 149, 1 - Savitar:

*savitā yantraīḥ pṛthivīm aram-*  
*ñād*  
*askambhané savitā dyām*  
*adṛñhat/*  
*âśvam ivādh kṣat dhúnim an-*  
*tárikṣam*  
*atūrte baddhām savitā sa-*  
*mudrām//*

Savitar calmed the earth with reins,  
 in the unpropped (space) Savitar fixed the heaven;  
 as if it were a roaring/trampling horse,  
 Savitar milked the intermediate space,  
 the ocean bound in the intra-versable/illimited (space).  
 (or: he milked the atmosphere... as a... horse,  
 Savitar has bound the sea in... (space))<sup>27</sup>.

27. The stanza seems to invite the emendation of Savitā to Savitrā in 1<sup>d</sup>. In this case we would have four well-balanced paradoxes about Savitar. Otherwise, if

The two passages betray verbal correspondences:

*pr̥thivīm, dyām, antāriṣam, adr̥ṇhat, aramṇāt,*

and a verbal variant:

*āstabhnāt (dyām): askambhané (dyām adr̥ṇhat)*

The three or four statements are more elaborate in the hymn to Savitar. Savitar calmed the earth with reins: they are a metaphor for thme rays of the sun. He fixed the sky in the unpropped space: it is the sun that will prop the heavens. He milked the atmosphere: the rays of the sun, Savitar's arms, milk the humidity in the air; the atmosphere is roaring or producing a noise as if a horse were trampling — during the storm; the rains that fell fertilized the earth like a stallion's semen, therefore the poet speaks of the horse/stallion (*aśva*) and not of the mare (*aśvā*). The atmosphere is, if we do not try to emend the text, compared to the sea/ocean, bound in limitless space; or, if we try to emend *savitā* to *savitrā*, it is said that Savitar bound the sea/ocean in limitless/intraversable space. To put reins on the earth, to fix heavens in an unpropped space, to milk a stallion, to bind the sea in an unbound space are elaborate paradoxes. However, each element in them is precisely motivated.

In the hymn to Indra it is, on the contrary, plainly affirmed that it is Indra who fixed the trembling earth, who calmed the enraging mountains, who widened the intermediate space and who propped the heavens. There is, it is true, no contradiction in it, but there is no motivation for it either.

These arguments based on the overt formulation of the two passages (verbal correspondences or variants, semiotic motivation) are further corroborated by the cryptophones in the stanza:

(an)tarikṣa(m) vi(mame)  
3 → 1 → 2 →

yaḥ pr̥(thivim)  
3 → 1 →

nstadhnat sa janasa:  
← → ← →

yaḥ par(vatān) pra-  
3 → 1 → 1 →

correct (k) ṣa to sa (4 times)!

(sa)jan(āsa)  
2 →

Savitā is in the nominative, *atūrte baddhām samudrām* should be in apposition to *antāriṣam*, which makes at first a less clear sense and parallels RV II 12, 2 less well from the syntactical point of view.

This seems to imply a conscious transfer of attributes and to explain why the mountains are not mentioned in the hymn to Savitar: it is because calming them characterizes Parjanya and not Savitar. «Parjanyaḥ Savitari» (loc.) may point to the fact that there is one feature of Parjanya hidden among three attributes of Savitar<sup>28</sup>.

These are the reasons for supposing that already well-known prominent attributes of Savitar were simply shifted to Indra in contexts like *RV* II 12, 2 just to demonstrate his might and violence, which are extolled in other stanzas. With Indra everything is simply a heroic feat. It must be celebrated, but cannot be explained like the characters of the gods of nature or of the moral order.

In this perspective the doubt expressed in stanza 5 may be explained as a doubt about Indra's divine nature:

*yām smā prchānti kúha séti  
ghorám  
utém āhur naiśó astíty enam/  
só aryáḥ pustīr víja ivā mināti  
śrād asmai dhatta sá janāsa  
indrah//*

The dreadful one of om they  
ask: «Where is he?»  
and say of him: «He is not/does  
not exist»,  
he diminishes the riches/the  
bloom of the foreigner like a  
stake,  
have faith in him; he, o peoples,  
is Indra.

This doubt is suppressed, however, by affirming his victorious character in battle, which therefore seems to have been a generally accepted fact. It might corroborate his originally heroic character. The origin of his divine character in the *Ṛksamhitā*, as it seems, can be precisely explained by transfers of divine attributes to him. His character is not, however, reducible even to the sum of those attributes of atmospheric and celestial deities which were attrac-

28. On the other hand, in that case we must not emend Savitā to Savitrā in *RV* X 149, 1, but must take samudra as in apposition to antariksa in order to have a complete correspondence between what were originally Savitar's attributes in both passages. It warns us how complex may be the reasons for a given structure in our texts.

ted to him, just because of a specific residuum of heroic attributes that are well represented, for instance, by his characteristic epithets (v. part III).

Thus it seems probable that he was not simply a younger divine character in any line of inheritance, such as I have tried to sketch, but a heroic character who attained his divine position by attraction of attributes which served to deify him. In the mythic system, Indra was able, perhaps just because of his lack of any definite divine nature, to unite the characters of the two lines of divinities: of the atmospheric and of the celestial gods (3):

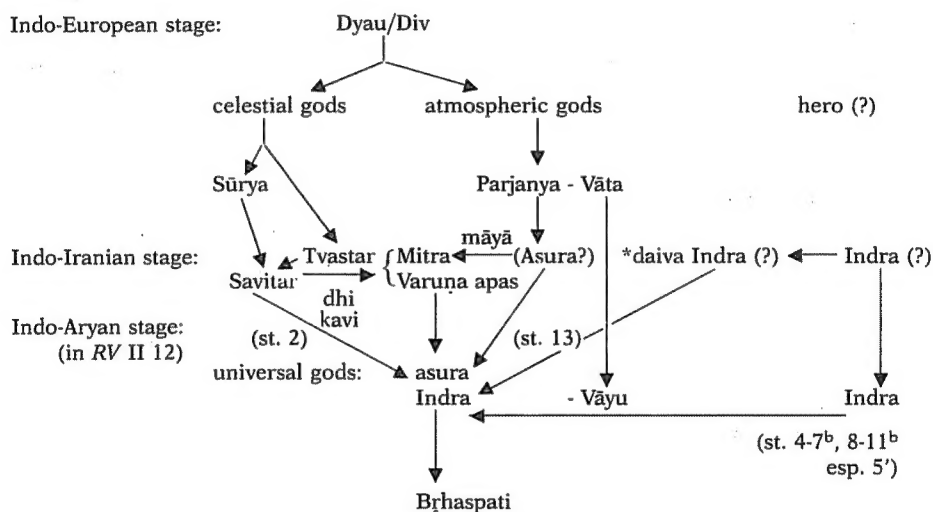


Diagram (3) shows how, in the *Rksamhitā*, all the gods, *viśve devās*, could have become headed by Indra, *indrajyeṣṭhās*. It happened because of the position he attained in the mythic system.

To understand all the media of transfer, we must not lose sight of the mediating position of Mitra and Varuṇa, who were able — being deities of a different ontological order — to associate with both the atmospheric and the celestial deities. They can also separate from them (as they actually do in ca. 25 entire hymns and elsewhere) and retain some of their essential attributes (distributing rains, raising the sun, etc.) or eventually convey those attribu-

tes to their next associate. In the Mitanni treaty they were already associated with Indra<sup>29</sup>.

The motive for transferring the attributes of the atmospheric and even of the celestial deities to Indra and for exalting him thereby to the central position in the pantheon may be found in the probable fact that the sacrificers (the orderers of sacrificial rites) in the solemn ritual, for which the hymns of the *Ṛksamhitā* were intended, were for the most part *kṣatriyas*, especially *rājans*, to whom the cult of the warrior hero-god was peculiar. For them, to sacrifice to gods too different from their martial ideal would have been to no purpose. The brahmans, who had to perform sacrificial rites, simply had to comply, if they wanted to continue exercising their sacred knowledge and to retain their religious and social function.

## VI

The philological evidence proves that no regularities of mechanical oral versification can be accepted as relevant reasons for apparent inconsistencies in the élite oral poetry of the *Ṛksamhitā*.

The most important issue, however, is that what seemed to have been a synchronic chaos of kathenotheism now appears clearly as a diachronic development to the *Ṛgyvedic* pantheon, where identical attributes of different divinities may point to diffe-

29. In RV II 12, 2 their names too might be present in cryptophones:

Varuṇā (du.): parvatān prakupitān aramṇāt... varīyo

1 → 2 → 3 → 4

Mitra (2 x): antarikṣam vimame, dyām astabhnāt... Indrah

2 → 3 → 1 → 1 → 3 → 2 → 4 →

This may look too fanciful. However, the names of Dyau (except in the overt mention, but in accusative, i.e. in a different contextual position), Sūrya, Tvaṣṭar, Asura (except in a rather improbable way), Agni, Soma (except in a much less probable way) or Ásvins cannot be constructed by means of cryptophones; i.e. the cryptic information does not merely make some constructions possible, but also must exclude other unwanted constructions. Moreover, in this case the doubling of both Varuṇa (dual) and Mitra (who is twice alluded to) may corroborate the cryptophonic analysis. They may have been thus doubled in order to accompany both hidden divine characters: once Savitar and once Parjanya.

rent ages from the Indo-European period at least, in which they played partially analogous roles.

The mythic and ritual system seems, on the other hand, to have been achieving ever wider syntheses on the ground of syntagmatic transfers of divine attributes to terrestrial and — what is essential — ritual deities, Agni and Soma, but also, on the other hand, to have been undergoing several reforms on the ground of paradigmatic transfers of attributes from older atmospheric or celestial — in brief cosmic — divine characters to younger ones.

The textual evidence revealing in the *Rksamhitā* memories of the older stages of the mythic and ritual system or — in other words — of older subsystems and their relative temporal sequence since the Indo-European period, enables us to understand better why the Vedas have always been traditionally considered as preserving the most ancient or primeval knowledge of divine seers.

This historical memory preserved in the structure of the hymns is astonishing. In the case of the subordinative transfers, both over and cryptic information betray the intentional processes of the development of the system. In the substitutive transfers overt information is rather exceptional, but nevertheless cryptic information does persist<sup>30</sup>.

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30. Far from treating the gods as figures of fiction in a kind of oral poetry, of whom it is not necessary or even possible to tell the truth, or as subject to adulation and therefore perhaps disinclined to the truth, as they would be in a kathenotheist system, the *Rgvedic* poet tells them overtly those insights he may say, or cryptically the remainder that he feels obliged to say, because it is the divine audience, the gods, who are, especially in times of violence, disinclined to what may be overt, *pratyakṣa-dviṣas*, and inclined to what must be covert, *parokṣapriyās* (*Bṛhadāranyakop.* 1,2.2).